Mat-Su Monitor

December 2012

Students Look Foward To New Facility at College

Mat-Su College paramedic students. The new paramedic and nursing facility will open January 14th.

By Timothy Steenhout

What is all that construction in Snodgrass? Who are these people walking around in full black "ninja" suits and boots? We here at the Mat-Su College Paramedic Student Association are happy to answer these questions and more.

We are Paramedic students. We are all highly motivated individuals and certified EMT-I or higher with varied levels of experience, from many years in local and out of state EMS, Anchorage Fire Department, mountain guiding and Ski Patrol, to just a couple years out of high school.

The program is headed by Kathy Griffin and we are taught advanced critical thinking skills and medical field procedures to assist us with field assessments and treatment. In addition to lectures and lab skills practice, we have the privilege of receiving clinical experience at Anchorage Fire Department, Alaska Native Medical Center, Providence and Regional hospitals.

This last Halloween, the Paramedic Student Association hosted a Halloween moulage event. Moulage is victim makeup such as bleeding, stab wounds, burns, lacerations, and bruising that is used in Hollywood and EMS practical exams to give the situations a much more realistic feel. Moulage is useful for Halloween costumes, zombie flash mobs, movies and for having some good fun.

The next event the Paramedic Student Association has planned is a blood drive on December 5th.

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Meet the New Art Coordinator

By Denise Reeve

This week I had the pleasure of interviewing Felicia Desimini, the new Mat-Su College Art Department Coordinator. An elegant, petite woman, she perched gracefully in her office chair for the interview; while we chatted, she shared her love of art, art education, and teaching, particularly in her new position.

Desimini is not only new to MSC, but she is also a recent transplant to the Valley. While interviewing for her position this summer, she fell in love with the Mat-Su Valley, and is amazed by the local art community and plethora of artists available here. Felicia posts the reasons she is happy to be here in Alaska daily on Facebook.

Photo courtesy Felicia Desimini

Originally a self-taught, successful commercial painter, Felicia paints at a rate of 3-4 originals each year.

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College Hires New Math Prof.

By Stephen Warta

Dr. Heather Allen is one of the three new, full-time faculty members on campus. She is the head of the Mathematics Department and teaches Statistics and Mathematics, including Trigonometry and Calculus.

Born on the East Coast, Dr. Allen grew up a military brat, traveling from place to place. These travels gave her interesting insight to life, enabled her to acclimatize extremely well, and provided her with a sense of adventure. She has lived in areas ranging from the East Coast, to the Middle East, to Alaska.

Dr. Allen attended college at Texas A&M University where she received a Bachelor's in Mathematics and Computer Science, a Master's in Math,

» See Dr. Allen **Page 2**

Dr. Allen

Continued from page 1

and a Doctorate in Education. This education was spaced out over many years, and she has no plans of ever going back to school for more education.

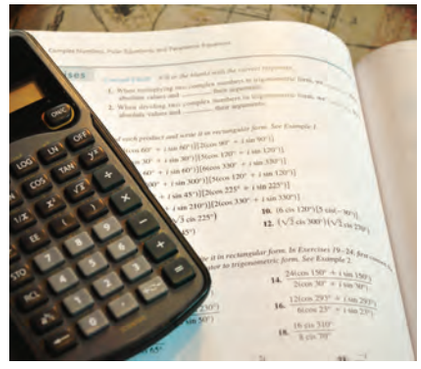
Dr. Allen first attended college in her twenties, with the intention of becoming a nurse. In her first year, she was taking classes like Chemistry and Anatomy and Physiology. While in these classes, she observed students who were having problems learning. She began to help these students with their studies, and this is where she first "got the teaching bug."

After some thought, Dr. Allen decided that she wanted to teach math. This choice was not an easy one as she did not consider herself to be naturally good at math, but she stayed with it, wanting to be able to teach and help other students in a subject that is often viewed as difficult.

Dr. Allen has taught for over fourteen years at many different colleges before coming to Mat-Su College, including: Texas A&M University, Paris Junior College, East field College, Qatar Community College, and Dillingham University. Dr. Allen does not intend to leave Mat-Su College until she retires.

Dr. Allen tries to create an environment in her classes where there is respect for the students and a safe environment to ask questions and learn. Her teaching philosophy summed up is to "Learn by doing."

One great challenge that she believes she faces is competing with social media networks which greatly impact learning, and which sometimes teach students in incorrect ways. Dr. Allen said that one of the greatest anxieties she has as a professor is dealing with students that desperately need help but do not ask. "I try to be approachable, and I always say 'it takes a village' to accomplish anything – especially education."



Art Coordinator

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Her foray into teaching first began as a guest artist sought out as a traveling painting presenter.

Her passion for the arts naturally led her to seek a formal education in the arts. She believes the formal training simply enhances any artist's ability to see, appreciate, and create better art.

Felicia was delighted to find, after investigating the Machetanz family, that she prefers the same style of painting for which Fred Machetanz is famous: under painting on panel, with thin glazes over the top; a renaissance style technique not widely used today.

Desimini started her education in 1998 and received her BFA in 2001, her Master's degree in August of 2004, and finally her PhD (of Art History, art criticism, and art research) in 2011.

During the years between earning her master's and her PhD, Felicia helped her children with their college experience, as she wanted them to get though college debt free. Studies recently have shown students often have substantial debt post-college.

Desimini feels that teaching art is an opportunity to welcome students to what may seem to some as an "often off-putting experience," and her desire is to show students how the skills gained through education can open the world of art for them; her mantra is, "art is for everyone".

Felicia's goal here at MSC is to grow the Art Department; she would like to see an Associate of Fine Arts degree program offered solely here in the Valley.

While new to MSC, Desimini has quickly developed rapport with a large cohort of students on campus; even some of the toughest have decided she is a great fit. She has championed the Team Art Club and is working with the Dance Club to connect with students.

While soft-spoken, her enthusiasm on campus cannot be overlooked. Mat-Su College staff, faculty, and students are excited to welcome her and we look forward to learning with her for many years to come.

MSC Veterans

By Mat-Su Veterans Services

Mat-Su College has a very high population of students who are veterans or dependents of veterans. This makes Veteran's Day extra special on our campus. To that end, MSC Veteran's Services is put on a campus-wide week-long series of events to honor our veterans.

As part of our Veteran's Day celebration, we asked each office/department to participate by decorating their area or erecting a display to honor our MSC Veterans in some way.

As part of the campus's Veteran's Day celebration, we once again coordinated a Flag Folding Ceremony by the main entrance (flag pole). Colony High School JROTC performed the ceremony and Mr. Gene Horner from the Mat-Su Concert Band played Taps.

The Colony High School Junior ROTC participates in a flag folding ceremony at Mat-Su College while Director Colberg looks on. Photo courtesy Rebecca Oprish.

In Defense of the Humanities

By Jake Magoon

I am known to those who know me best as an ardent lover of logic and mathematics. The degree of beauty and certainty that can be found in a rigorous mathematical proof is something which can rarely be found anywhere else in life.

However, it is precisely my unquestionable love of math and logic that I feel places me into the ideal position to speak as to the incredible value inherent in the humanities, a field which all too often finds itself under threat during times of budgetary constraints.

Faced with questions regarding usefulness and comparisons to technical fields, the benefits we derive from a strong emphasis on the humanities in our academic ecosystem are not always immediately apparent in light of how hard-logic and the scientific method often take backstage in the heart of these disciplines.

Nonetheless, it is in fact the freedom to make creative, intuitive leaps, provided by courses in the humanities that make them so essentially to our community and civilization as a whole.

Physics stands as perhaps the archetypal productive hard-science: logic and mathematics working in conjunction with observable, experimental data. Today, theoretical physics is currently grappling with problems whose answers may very well lie out of this universe.

According to the current understanding of the way in which the universe should work, the mass of galaxies, galaxy clusters, and the universe itself can be calculated based upon general relativistic methods, and via accounting for the visible luminous mass of the universe (stars, gas clouds, etc).

However, when both methods are attempted, two distinct calculations result. In order to account for this discrepancy, the idea of "Dark Matter" was born. While its existence has been inferred via objects we can see, Dark Matter (that which is proposed to account for 63% of the mass of our universe) has not itself been observed. Similarly, contrary to previously held belief, the rate of expansion of the universe is not slowing down, but accelerating, which is attributed to (via inference) Dark Energy.

In addition to these terms, as-of-yet unexplained workings of the universe are hypothesized to be caused by Dark Fluid and Dark Flow, and theories ranging from Quantum Gravity to String Theory and gravity being a weak force because it is spread out over multiple universes that we will never be able to detect are all seriously regarded theories, and have every right to be regarded as such.

I mention them only to make a point: creative, intuitive leaps are often essential in order to break out of deadlocks imposed by the limitations of the structure of our understanding.

The value inherent in the humanities lies not necessarily in its ability to solve problems posed to it in the context of our current paradigm, but to analyze, critique, and understand the frameworks of our priorities, organization, values, and understanding themselves, in order to ensure that we are asking the right questions and headed in the right direction.

These are not entirely relativistic questions with no answers, and indeed, it is the humanities that provides us with the opportunity to make creative leaps (and to produce students, workers, leaders, and citizens capable of intuitive problem solving)

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College Hires RE Energy Faculty

By Stephen Warta

Mark Masteller is a new full-time faculty member in the Technical Education department here at Mat-Su College, where he is developing a Renewable Energy program.

Masteller grew up in Littleton in the suburbs of Denver. After graduating from high school, Masteller attended Colorado State University, where he graduated with a Bachelor's of Science and a Master's in Wildlife Biology. He then moved up to Alaska, and worked as a Wildlife Biologist and Technician.

His work as a Biologist took him all over Alaska. This extensive traveling helped him experience life in rural Alaska and better understand our energy situation. Prior to his teaching career at Mat-Su College, Masteller served on Community Councils and seven years on the Borough Planning Commission. In addition, he recently ran for Borough mayor.

After serving nineteen years in Alaska as a Wildlife Biologist, Masteller decided he wanted to do more to preserve the wildlife in Alaska. The method he chose to preserve Alaskan wildlife was to provide education about preserving the environment. Masteller felt that there was a huge opportunity for Alaskans to use renewable resources and for people to train and educate people regarding the market.

As he continued studying towards his Master's degree, Masteller worked as an assistant and later spent one year teaching at Alaska Pacific University before coming on board at Mat-Su College.

Before teaching, Masteller worked at the Alaska Center for Appropriate Technology and the Cascadia Green Building Council, where he worked on energy efficiency and conservation, trained newcomers, and developed curriculum.

Masteller's teaching style involves the encouragement of working in groups, hands on experience to facilitate the understanding of key concepts, and by providing the opportunity for individual students to present material to the class. He

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What's Wrong With Us: Part II: The People

By Jake Magoon

This is the second article of a two part series in which I attempt to diagnose some of the root causes of the present-day dysfunction of our society.

In the first part, I laid out a system for understanding some of the dysfunction inherent in our particular version of a free press, and the consequences (like self-censorship) we face as a result of having a press whose very existence depends upon a cozy relationship with those who provide revenue (advertising dollars) in this age where spectacle triumphs over literacy.

Part two of this series turns its gaze to all of us; for it is we as individuals that comprise our society, and we who determine the nature of our culture, regardless of its etiology or how the society into which we were born first shaped us.

Irrespective of the psychological and behavioral patterns and norms to which we adhere, should we become capable of perceiving how the manner in which we behave impacts society as a whole, it is up to us to intervene if we would like society to change.

The two greatest impediments to our achieving a society wherein we and our institutions are capable of dealing not only with the challenges we face, but also improving our lot in life (imagine that: not worried about how to mitigate damage, but discussions of what to improve next), can be best summarized as, first, our juvenile insistence upon relating to all that is around us like a game (fun has its place, but some things are real and have consequences).

Second, this idea that we are simultaneously entitled to have our opinions taken seriously and are being oppressed if we are asked to put forth effort into educating ourselves about our opinions beyond simply ignoring all contradictory information and, like a manure-seeking missile, heading directly to the source which provides us with the most comforting ideological talking-points in exchange for the least amount of thinking.

Both of these commonplace orientations toward our society appear quite irresponsible when we consider that lives are saved or destroyed as a result of policy decisions that are enacted based upon their ranking in the popular will.

Don't get me wrong, a combination of willful ignorance and the type of emotional investment we see amongst fans of spectator sports and day-time television soap operas is a reasonable response to have when one feels powerless and is inundated with propaganda on a constant basis; we simply are as we are, and I am certainly not trying to throw any ethical guilt your way, dear reader.

However, if we'd like a little more say in the direction of our future's trajectory, it would help if we would put on our big boy/girl pants, swallow our pride, throw out our pre-conceived notions, and get serious. Empiricism works.

Games are fun, but we shouldn't base the model for our orientation towards reality upon the structure of a game (other than, perhaps, the importance of having fun as opposed to winning). In a game, especially a game with teams, what matters isn't the truth, it isn't the well-being of your opponent, and it isn't even your own well-being: what matters is winning.

From chess to Uno, sometimes the "smartest" move is to sacrifice a bit of what you have if you know it will hurt the other side even more. That sounds an awful lot like Congress (and their lobbyist allies) to me, and the bad news, is that we are the pawns.

In a game, we cheer for our side, and hate the enemy, and all we need to be told is where our starting positions lie, regardless of how crazy or ungrounded in reality those starting positions might be.

But in real life, when we attempt to role-play as an informed citizen and cling to the ideological "back-story," when we fail to take personal pride in accuracy and instead take pride in defending our status as member of Team A rather than those monsters over on Team B, facts have long since gone out the window, and we may very well find ourselves arguing for policies which are entirely to our detriment, but unlike a game, with no upside (see: opposing single-payer healthcare). Empiricism works.

Should enough of us break free from the shackles of tribalism, there is still the matter of how we make decisions and come to our points of view. We must either responsibly rescue ourselves in exchange for the right to blissful delusion, or at least make an honest attempt at coming to our conclusions (and not just saying we do) based upon evidence, conclusions that change along with changing evidence, and not search out for "evidence" to support the emotionally and circumstantially convenient faith-based conclusions we have determined from the start. Empiricism works.

I cannot say for sure what it will take

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Mat-Su Monitor

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Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman

The People

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to bring back our competent, "can-do spirit." Nonetheless, I suspect that if we would be less concerned about our team winning, more concerned about the lives of real people, and, in that context, be less attached to our ideas being "right," less likely to throw an emotional temper tantrum when confronted with opposing evidence, and more willing to take pride in our clear analysis and thoughtful problem solving, it could very likely go a long way. Empiricism works.

Humanities

Continued from page 3

when we are in a situation where our very framework of understanding is the greatest roadblock to progress.

Much as how atomic theory was at first ridiculed and rejected, we must on occasion first present a hypothesis based upon intuitive creativity, before we can know where to begin the search.

It is not the case that we no longer need the humanities, but on the contrary, today it would seem we need the humanities now more than ever.

Masteller

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encourages classroom discussion and ongoing research on key topics in class.

Masteller said one concern he has while teaching is that he presents information too fast, unintentionally leaving students behind.

Concerning problems faces the education system; Masteller voiced concern regarding the career options available to students. Masteller felt that students are being overwhelmed by options and an inability to decide which career path to choose. The result of this dilemma is that students are spending more time in college than they would if they had more help planning their college career.

Masteller mentioned that throughout his career, students have taught him a variety of thing, but one important thing in particular that students have confirmed is that "there are a lot of different ways to look at any issue."

Masteller feels that the different points of view provided by students have created a unique environment in the classroom, one which helps him learn more about the culture and perspectives of others.

The Mat-Su Monitor would like to thank the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman for all of their support. Call (907) 352-2250 to learn about home delivery.

Paramedic

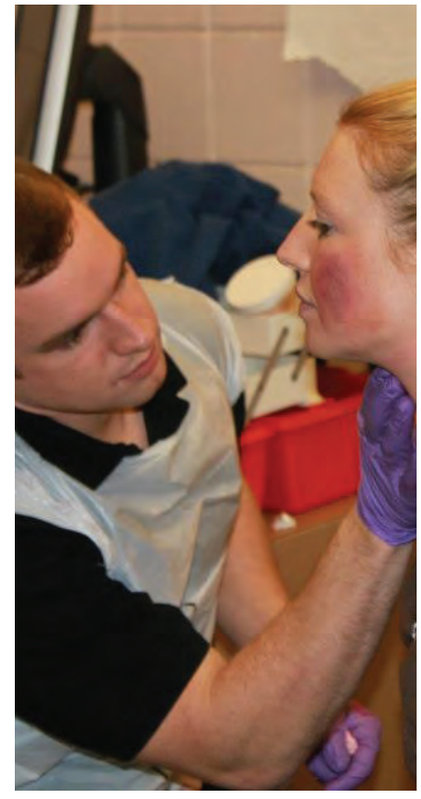
Continued from page 1

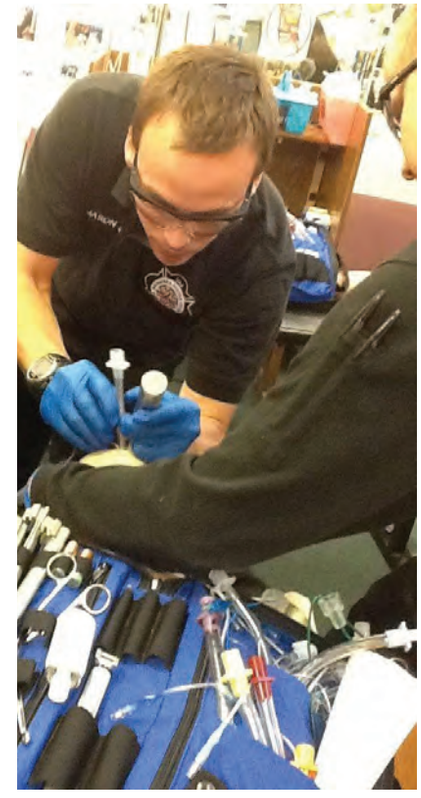
The Blood-Mobile will be in front of the main building; stay posted for further updates and times.

If you are a prospective paramedic student or even just curious about what we do, feel free to stop one of us in the hallway or come by the paramedic classroom.

We offer CPR classes and are willing to schedule one for those who need CPR certification for their job or just want to be able to help in the event of a cardiac arrest.

There is also a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Snodgrass Paramedic-Nursing expansion on January 14th at 3PM. Be sure to come to the event if you want a look around the new facility.





Students learn from simulations of emergency situations.

Opening ceremony for new nursing and paramedic facility

January 14th
3:00 P.M.
Snodgrass Hall

Dragon Cinema: Bridging Pop Culture Gap

By Denise Reeve

Have you ever attempted to discuss a pop culture reference with a friend like "Make my day," a line uttered by Clint Eastwood in "Dirty Harry," only to find they have not seen the movie? Or perhaps you attempted discussing the Miazaki cartoon "Spirited Away" with someone who grew up in the 1980's?

These pop culture references are often lost on their intended audience simply due to a generational gap; my nephew is the one who turned me on to Miazaki.

While discussing these missing references with my college friends over dinner one evening, it occurred to us that we should find a way to share our pop culture paradigms with one another. In that instant, Dragon Cinema was hatched!

Each week of this semester, Dragon Cinema picks a movie selected by one or more students wishing to share his or her favorite with others. The movie plays starting at 7:10 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays. The attendance so far has been sporadic, but as the movies are occasionally accompanied by popcorn, this may soon change!

So far, the cinema club has offered Wizards, The Minion mini movies, Hocus Pocus, The Thin Red Line (sponsored by the Veterans Club) and many more. Post-movie discussion continues on campus about these pop culture references often for days.

If you or your club has a movie you would like to see, please let head Dragon, Michael DiBattista, know by calling extension 9759, or stop by the student government dragon lair (JKB 129) during the week. Should attendance pick up we may be able to do matinee showings! Hope to see you there.

Dragon Cinema Meets Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays
at 7:10 P.M.
Contact Micheal DiBattista in JKB 129 for more information

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The University of Alaska is an equal employment opportunity/affirmative action employer and educational institution. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply. Applicants needing reasonable accommodation to participate in the application and screening process should contact the Mat-Su College Human Resource Services Coordinator at (907) 745-9725

Heavy Metal Field Trip

By Denise Reeve

This week, Mat-Su College art students were treated to a heavy metal experience. Professor John Barton took his 3-D Design students to the Arctic Fire Bronze Foundry.

Pat Garley, owner of the foundry, and well-known local sculptural artist, hosted the art students. With a preparation time of one week, students were given hard, preformed sand bricks to carve into any selected shape. The bricks were then used to learn the ancient art of sand casting metal; in this case, bronze. This sounds pretty simple, right? After reading this article, please decide for yourself.

Professor Barton has spent a good deal of time this semester attempting to impart the concept of "master the material," in other words, learning how to work with each new material.

The 3-Design course offers quick, limited exposure to different materials; students are expected to design an object with the material while adhering to certain criteria.

Pat Garley hosted art students at his foundry. Photo courtesy Kim Hayes.

Each new project brings new challenges with art concepts as well as learning to use the newest material. The casting project required the carving of a semi-solid sand brick. This material was not quite hard enough to carve like a rock, but rather seemed to often remove more material than needed and other times not enough.

Detailed designs in such a medium seemed difficult; my first attempt was a spider web bowl. Needless to say, I did not feel I mastered this material much, or at all. After seeing some of the designs from other students in the class and not wishing to squander such a fabulous art opportunity, I took a second brick home to try to come up with a better design.

All week long I worked to improve my technique. My second attempt is the parrot on a branch design I found on the web, wishing to master the material rather than worry about my drawing skills. One pleased artist and one brick for the project!

As a jewelry artist, metal is one of my favorite mediums with which to work. It takes time and skill to master this material as one needs to be aware of the status of the metal; has it been overworked to the point of now being brittle enough to break? Or is it softer and too flexible to hold its form under pressure?

In the case of casting, is the mold I created going to stand up to the casting process? Will the metal and casting gods smile on my endeavor today? I am no expert by any means, simply an engaged artist still learning to master the material and the process. The ancient art of bronze casting is a thrilling opportunity for me, and as it turned out, most of the other students in the 3-D Design class, as well.

Friday, I, along with other students, arrived early with brick in hand and overly excited (I could hardly wait) about the bronze pour. I was pretty sure my brick would hold up to the process.

Once gathered, we all carpooled over to the foundry. Inside we gathered and learned our bricks needed to be placed in a sand-filled container; they were shifted until perfectly level (the idea is to have gravity keep the metal in place while molten, so this is important).

Bronze must be approximately 2100

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Metal Pour

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degrees to pour properly, so we eagerly watched the process, while intermittently exploring the wonder of a professional foundry (I totally have tool envy)!

The crucible is kept in an enclosed, gas-heated container; metals to be melted must be warmed before adding to the molten mixture. Adding cold metal to hot metal can, and very often, causes an explosion of metal; once again, mastery of the material is required.

The crucible is kept very hot and is very heavy, so the pouring of the bronze requires multiple people, clad in proper safety equipment. A customized crane holds and assists with maneuvering the crucible to pour properly into the sand molds.

Once poured, the white and red hot metal pools in the carved molds. We then wait anxiously to see if the metal and casting gods have blessed us.

As is turns out, both of my castings are viable and the real finishing work then begins. After cooling the castings, Pat used a power saw to remove extraneous metal from the edges. Each piece has the edges ground for safety, then custom finish work is done by hand, after which the piece is fit for sand blasting. The pieces each have an artist determine to what extent this or that should be changed, and finally, whether or not the piece should have patina.

My art friend, Kim Hayes, and I both decide we will take our roughly finished pieces with us to continue working on them back at the Mat-Su College metal lab.

The heavy metal art field trip was an amazing experience, and having the opportunity to learn from a professional metal sculpture artist was a fabulous bonus.

This, along with learning the concepts of "mastering the material," and 3-D Design from Mat-Su College's Professor John Barton, means that we truly owe a thank you to MSC and Arctic Fire Bronze Foundry's Pat Garley. Thank you!

If you would like to learn more about the arts of metalsmithing, casting for jewelry, or bronze casting, please see the MSC Art Department; classes are offered every semester. Mat-Su College also has a metal smith club called the Metl Hedz.

Foundry owner Pat Garley, MSC Professor John Barton, and a student observe student's creations at Arctic Fire Bronze Foundry. Photo courtesy Kim Hayes.

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Student Government Leadership Opportunities

By Denise Reeve

Your student government leaders here at Matanuska-Susitna College form a governing body known as the Mat-Su Student Government Council (MSC SGC). This council is made up of an executive team, a president (Denise Reeve), a vice-president (Michael DiBattista), and a secretary (Andrea Bennett); these students maintain an office here on campus located in JKB 129.

Additionally, the council is comprised of senators (Marie Fremlin and Stephan Warta are just two of the many), and a representative for each campus club.

These student leaders meet each week on Wednesdays in FSM 105 (or occasionally FSM 205) to discuss issues pertinent to the student body, find solutions to these issues, and decide activities to be held on campus.

Each of these students participates in this council in addition to their regular scholarly endeavors here at Mat-Su College. Ultimately, the real question that must be asked, is why these students, who are very busy already, would give up their limited time to be involved in the MSC SGC?

There are three major reasons: they participate in a club activity; they care about issues facing students in college, or they want to make the MSC campus experience better.

Clubs on campus offer opportunities to meet students who have common interests. These clubs enrich the experience available here at Mat-Su College. Getting involved in a club often makes the time here at MSC more enjoyable simply because you meet and make friends!

Our campus offers more than 18 clubs this semester, to find out more please check out the MSC SCG clubs page. There is also a calendar of events offered by these clubs.

A campus like Mat-Su has a diverse group of students with varied backgrounds, cultures, interests, and even different age groups. When a disconnection of experiences occurs, we find issues that need to be resolved, and go about resolving them.

Student leaders discuss these issues and try to find ideas or solutions that are best for the group. The MSC Student Government Council provides the forum for these discussions and seeks synergistic communication that creates better solutions.

In my case, I wanted to make my college experience more fun; I began by getting involved in clubs (Metl Hedz and Team Art) and found a few issues where I felt a student perspective adds value. I have supportive friends and colleagues that I might not have met had I not spent time in these groups.

The Mat-Su College SGC offers opportunities to not only change your college experience, but also to network and connect to students, faculty, and staff. These connections and the time invested make Mat-Su College the community here better for all of us.

In short, Mat-Su College Student Government Council works for you, the student, and we make a difference here! Do you want to make a difference? We welcome you!

F.Y.I.
Student Government meets every Wedneday at noon in FSM 105

Murkowski Visits Campus

(*greenandgold.uaa.alaska.edu*)

Alaska's Senior U.S. Senator, Lisa Murkowski, visited with about 80 students, staff and guests at Matanuska-Susitna College on Halloween. College Director Talis Colberg and an "Honor Guard" of college librarians dressed as Charlie Brown and his colleagues escorted her to the podium.

Colberg then conducted an improvised séance with a crystal ball to introduce Senator Murkowski. He determined through the séance that the senator was visiting the best campus in the University of Alaska system.

The senator spoke and entertained questions for about one hour. She then boarded a bus to experience the local mass transit system with several area officials. Senator Murkowski was given the special Matanuska-Susitna College Arctic Dragons pen to commemorate her visit to the college.

Senator Murkowski visits MSC. Pictured with library staff and Talis Colberg. Photo by Rebecca Oprish.

Miracle Dancers and Drummers entertained MSC students, faculty and staff November 8th in the cafeteria. Photo courtesy Rebecca Oprish.

The Importance of Literature in Modern Society

By Micheal DiBattista

The two subjects students complain about the most in high school and college are mathematics and literature. Many students ask, "Where will I ever find this in the real world?" Mathematics is applicable in a plethora of fields, including carpentry, engineering, banking, information technology, and numerous others. Our lives are so inundated with literature however, that its importance in modern society is easily overlooked.

To examine this phenomenon, let's start with the beginning of literature in society. The oldest piece of popular literature in the world is one that many college students read every year—Gilgamesh.

The story of the eponymous hero Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu are a relatively simple read and offer a source of varying entertainment, depending upon the reader. The epic, however, contains many elements that are prevalent in modern television, movies, stories, and even real-life situations.

Gilgamesh is among the first pieces of literature to depict man's frantic struggle against inevitable death, as well as one of the earliest examples of a man coping with the death of a loved one—after the death of Enkidu,

Gilgamesh searches high and low for anything that will prevent his own death. He realizes, after much sojourning (and a thieving snake), that his legacy as King and the great walls of his city already serve to immortalize him.

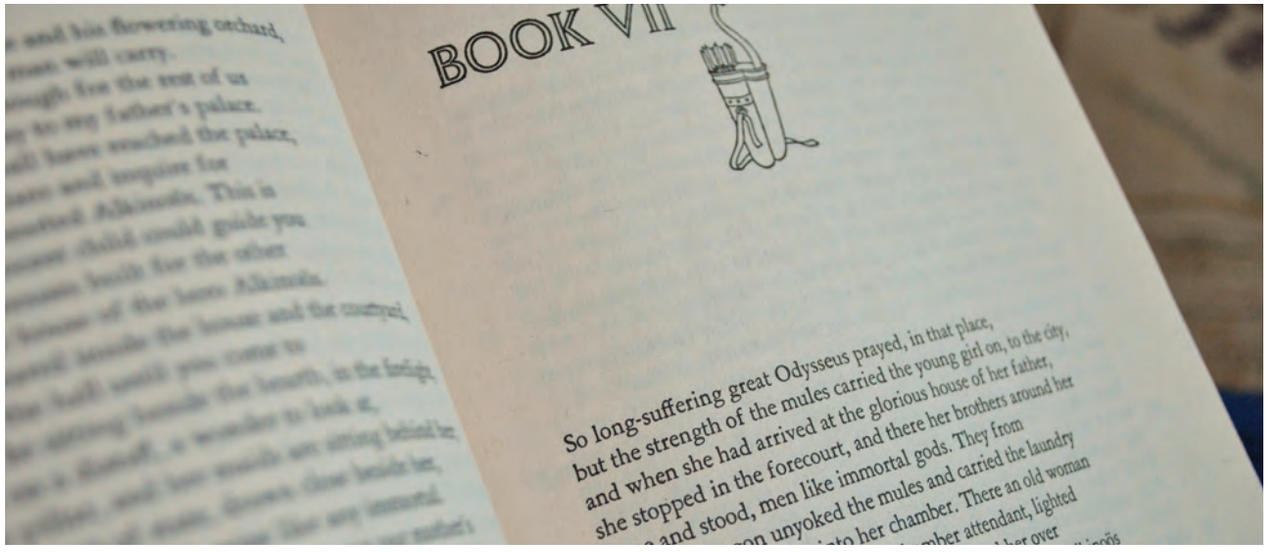
The hunger for immortality and legacy seen in Gilgamesh is a theme in almost any good story—the Evil Queen in Snow White, Achilles in the Iliad, Lord Voldemort in Harry Potter, Captain Jack Sparrow in Pirates of the Caribbean—all fall victim to this hunger. Gilgamesh teaches us that though it is impossible to live eternally our actions can have a lasting impact on the world, if we choose to make a difference.

The aim of this piece however is not to stand on a soap-box—Gilgamesh also serves as a basic model for the modern hero tale—Gilgamesh has absentee parents (one of them a goddess represented as a cow), a strong hubris, a misfit friend that leads him into an adventure (and later dies, which causes him to go on yet another adventure), lots of fighting (and glorification of battle prowess), a flood story similar to the one in other religious texts—just to name a few of the basic elements with which the modern reader/movie-viewer/video gamer may be familiar.

The same can be said for Homer's Odyssey, where the concepts of one-eyed giants (Cyclopes—Cyclops), malignant women with magic wands (Circe—witches), seductive songstresses (the Sirens), and vengeful gods (Poseidon—innumerable examples) originated, just to name a few.

The "moral" of this story is that literature, particularly ancient and classical, offers insight into many modern questions. For example: why do witches use magic wands? Why are one-eyed giants, who could possibly be very humble and nice creatures, always turn out to be angry, man-eating monsters? Why are people today so preoccupied with strong, tall men that don't shy away from violence?

Read Gilgamesh. Read the Odyssey and the Iliad. It is ironic how many "new" storylines were practically written thousands of years ago by ancients—these things have been around since ancient Sumer and Greece.


BOOK VII
So long-suffering great Odysseus prayed, in that place,
but the strength of the mules carried the young girl on, to the city,
and when she had arrived at the glorious house of her father,
she stopped in the forecourt, and there her brothers around her
and stood, men like immortal gods. They from
unyoked the mules and carried the laundry
into her chamber. There an old woman

Video Game Review: Resident Evil 6

By Keelan Mangus

Even as Resident Evil 6 opens, the player is thrust straight into the thick of it. Starting you out as the familiar BSAA Agent Leon Kennedy, it quickly becomes clear that the world is going to hell in a hand basket, and things are very, very wrong.

It's like Raccoon City all over again, with zombies on all sides, helicopter crashes, and pure chaos. During this opening scene, the player is introduced to the new controls and mechanics of the game, which are fairly consistent with that of the series thus far, though with minor and useful changes; allowing the player to store herbs for instant use, like tablets for healing instead of sifting through their inventory.

Also there is a total change of the inventory system that completely removes most of the need for space management that was present before; instead, the player is allowed to carry all of their guns at once, with slots for ammo.

After the intro scene cuts off at a cliffhanger, you actually get to go to the menu. There are three campaigns to play through, in any order you'd like (the order of events are all simultaneous, so don't fret about playing in the wrong order) from the get-go, and after beating those, an additional one, single player only, is unlocked.

That's right: the first three campaigns all have co-op. But don't worry; if you're playing alone, the AI is not a fraction of the stupidity that was Sheva in Resident Evil 5 (or Chris, if you preferred the newbie). No, instead your companion is not only invincible, but is actually helpful from time to time.

Not only that, but they also have infinite ammo, so you no longer need to pull out your hair as they waste

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Video Game

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your ever-precious ammo on rocks, or use your redgreen herbs on a simple scratch.

As for actually playing with friends, split-screen is available as well as online. With the appropriate difficulty, the game can prove to still be a grim, horrifying challenge even with a buddy at your side.

Each of the initial three campaigns appeals to a different aspect of Resident Evil fans. Leon's campaign picks up from before the intro even begins, thrusting you into the heart of finding out just what is behind the massive outbreak. The gameplay is more akin to a faster-paced, "shootier" Resident Evil 4, only with the main enemy being a return to the traditional zombie.

Chris Redfield's campaign is by far the shootiest, playing like an extension of Resident Evil 5, with combat galore as you gun down countless Javo, the successor to Las Plagas that has the undead shooting guns, driving vehicles, and exploding into horrible monsters.

With Jake, who is quickly revealed to the be son of former arch-villain Albert Wesker, we get a nice mix of both play styles as he and Sherry strive for a cure for the outbreak, all the while being pursued by the completely and utterly horrifying Ustanak the Tracker, who makes Nemesis look like a little girl in comparison.

All in all, Resident Evil 6 offers a fantastic horror experience that fans of the genre, veterans of the series or newcomers, should not miss. The game presents the gripping story and vivid characters that Resident Evil has lead us to expect, and doesn't disappoint in terms of gameplay.

At the end of the day you'll find yourself weeping bitter tears of terror as the words form across your screen: "You are dead!"

Restaurant Review: Humdinger's Gormet Pizza Company

By Hattie Schmidtkunz

Humdinger's Gourmet Pizza Company is downtown Palmer's newest place to enjoy stone fired pizza. The new business serves a variety of tasty pizzas, salads, and appetizers. There is even a "Build Your Own Humdinger" option where customers can pick from a variety of sauces, cheeses, meats and vegetables to order the pizza of their dreams. In addition, Humdinger's also offers a gluten-free option for all of their creations.

I visited the establishment one weekday evening to try their pizza out for myself. I had heard many raving reviews and looked forward to adding mine to the clamor.

The parking lot was full when I arrived and most of the seats had been taken by pizza loving patrons, too. The small restaurant had a warm atmosphere, with wood and stone accents.

While I looked over the menu of unique and delicious looking pizzas, one of my dining partners ordered the "Thai Chick" salad, complete with sweet chili sauce, chicken, onions, carrots, cheese, cucumbers and bean sprouts.

Our server was friendly and polite, graciously taking a few moments to make a personal connection, even though the restaurant was busy. I ordered a 16 inch $22.50 pizza dubbed "Gimme the Greek," topped with feta cheese, mozzarella, Kalamata olives, pepperoncini peppers, onions and tomatoes.

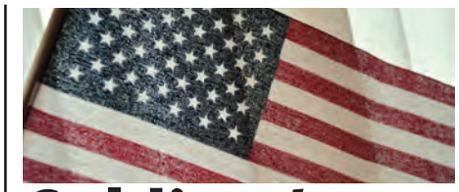
While we waited, we admired the interior design work and the lovely art done by a local artist that decorated the walls. A plus for college students, business folks, or other computer users was the availability of an outlet at every table located against the wall. From the seating area, the big open oven could be seen, as well as the chef who kept an eye on the wood fire heating the oven and the pizzas cooking inside.

The friendly restaurant manager came out of the kitchen to make the rounds and ensure the customers were happy. He told us that Humdinger's was one of the few restaurants around that relied solely on wood to cook their pizzas.

When our pizza arrived, we all immediately remarked as to how good it smelled and how tasty it looked. The thin crunchy crust turned out to be just right, and the toppings were full of flavor. I was a fan especially of the pepperoncini peppers. The feta and mozzarella cheeses were an excellent compliment to the rest of the toppings.

I was pleasantly surprised by the absence of excess grease on the pizza, it wasn't greasy at all! When I looked over the menu, I had noticed that there were a few desert options, but the pizza turned out to be plenty filling.

I would certainly recommend a trip to Humdinger's for lunch or dinner; it's worth it! Humdinger's is located at173 South Valley Way in Palmer. They are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M., and Sunday 12:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. Humdinger's is closed on Mondays.



Soldiers' Poem

By Unknown

For all the free people that still protest, you're welcome,
We protect you and you are protected by the best.
Your voice is strong and loud, but who will fight for you?
No one standing in your crowd.

We are the fathers, brothers, and sons,
Wearing the boots and carrying the guns.
We are the ones that leave all we own,
To make sure your future is carved in stone.

We are the ones who fight and die.
We might not be able to save the world, well at least we try
We walked the paths to where we are at
And we want no other choice than that.

So when you rally your group to complain,
Take a look in the back of your brain.
In order for that flag you love to fly,
Wars must be fought and young men must die.

We came here to fight for the ones we hold dear,
If that's not respected, we would rather stay here.
So please stop yelling and put down your signs,
And pray for those behind enemy lines.

When the conflict is over and all is well,
Be thankful that we chose to go through hell.

(Submitted by Chad Stone, president of Mat-Su Veteran's Club)

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